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the present public road passes over its site. Now this avenue could not have led to a ford at Watson's corner; but it is in a direct line with the Ford I have endeavoured to establish.

In like manner the old narrow bridge called the "King's Bridge," near Mr. Montgomery's house at Beers' Bridge, shows the line of the original road from Castlereagh, and leads to the supposition that the chiefs of Clannaboy, when coming to Belfast from their castle on the hill, took the Ford road somewhere in the direction of the Ballymacarrett Church.

OPENING OF A CAIRN ON SCRABA MOUNTAIN (COUNTY OF DOWN), AND DISCOVERY OF DANISH COINS.

A REPORT having reached me of the discovery of a number of ancient Danish coins in opening a large cairn on Scraba Mountain, near Newtownards, I was at once struck with the importance of having the matter investigated. No instance had before occurred of such a discovery, and, if correct, it seemed likely to throw a new light on the date of these ancient structures, whose origin has hitherto been veiled in obscurity. I accordingly requested the assistance of several gentlemen interested in such matters, and endeavoured to ascertain all the particulars as exactly as possible. In company with Guy Stone, Esq., J.P., of Barnhill, near Comber, I visited the spot and conversed with persons who had been present at the opening of the cairn. Unfortunately every vestige of it had been removed before our visit; but the separate statements of the various individuals to Mr. Stone and myself agreed in almost every detail. Mr. Carruthers, of Belfast, immediately secured specimens of the coins from the jeweller to whom they had been sold, representing all the various types found; and after a minute examination of them, and a comparison with similar coins already published, drew up an account of them which will be found accompanying this article, and which is illustrated by accurate fac-similes of the coins, drawn under his own inspection.

In order to render intelligible the position of the cairn, and the remarks which follow respecting the discovery, a brief description of the locality will be necessary.

Scraba is a well-known isolated mountain, standing at the inner extremity of Strangford Lough; and, though not of great elevation, is by far the most conspicuous object in the landscape for many miles, in consequence of the low undulating character of the surrounding country. Its base, though now distant nearly half a mile from the sea at high-water, has evidently been washed by its waves at some earlier period; for everywhere in the flat tract of ground now extending between the hill and the lough recent sea-shells are continually dug up from the soil at a trifling depth. The Montgomery MSS. (written about the year 1698) mention this ground as "a large salt marish full of medicinall herts," for which the Dutch offered a considerable rent to Lord Montgomery;

and so late as the year 1764 it is described in Harris's Down as a "large and noted salt marsh under the hill of Scraba." Like most of the hills and promontories of the North-east coast, Scraba presents a peculiar and well-marked outline; its outward face next the sea being nearly a perpendicular precipice towards the top, while its lower part slopes rapidly to the base. At whatever period the sea extended to the foot of the hill, and even much later, when the ground beneath continued a salt marsh, this elevated slope must have formed the only available pass between the east and west districts of the country. The old county road still crosses its lower portion, as if following the more ancient line of thoroughfare, portions of which, indeed, are traceable a little higher up; while at a lower level now passes the more modern railway pursuing a parallel course. At the earlier period alluded to, the upper part of this slope must therefore have been one of the most conspicuous positions that could have been selected for any monument or structure of importance. On this very spot, from time immemorial, has been a cairn of vast size, formed chiefly of small loose stones, but long overgrown with a thick brushwood of ancient thorns and hazels. It occupied nearly a rood of ground, measuring each way about thirty yards, and was known in all the neighbourhood, and from generation to generation, by the name of the "Giant's Grave."

The present occupier of the land, Mr. Miller, having recently obtained possession of the farm, determined on removing the cairn, and converting the spot into arable ground; and accordingly, in the month of February last, he commenced clearing away the stones and burying them in deep trenches cut for that purpose. He found the chief part of these stones accumulated on the side of the cairn lowest on the hill, seeming to indicate that many of them may have been cleared off the surrounding land from time to time, and thrown up on the heap already formed; their position on the lower side of the cairn being naturally accounted for by the greater facility of depositing them there than higher up the hill. After removing immense quantities of these small stones he came upon a number of great blocks of stone placed so as to enclose a space of regular form—namely, an elongated square, five feet long and about three feet wide. Four of the blocks were of especially large size, being sunk three feet in the ground, and projecting upwards five feet more. Three of these formed the one end of the parallelogram at the more elevated side of the cairn, while the fourth was placed at the other extremity; the remaining portions of the enclosure being completed by a number of stones of less dimensions, but still of considerable size. The roof or covering of the enclosed space consisted merely of large stones thrown on without any apparent regularity. When these last were removed the contents of the interior space were found to be as follows. Collected in a pile in the centre were a quantity of charred bones, among which neither skull, vertebræ, nor rib was distinguishable. Mr. Miller, however, states that he observed among them a thigh-bone and collar-bone; and Mr. Dugan, who lives near, and who saw the bones when discovered, says he recognised what he calls a loin-bone (pelvis): both these persons being of opinion that the bones were of an unusually large size. The whole of the bones were collected

subsequently, and buried in a neighbouring field. Surrounding the bones, but not intermixed with them, was a quantity of wood charcoal, perfectly fresh and sound, mixed with earth of some kind. In the midst of this was found the lower portion of an earthen vessel, of reddish burnt clay, and about the size and shape of a large saucer, with rounded bottom. The upper edges being broken, showed that it had been deeper when whole. Its exterior was ornamented with something like flowers in relief. This fragment was re-interred along with the bones, and has not been recovered. The entire contents of the enclosure having been cleared away, the floor was reached, which was rudely paved or levelled with stones, but beneath which nothing was discovered. Immediately outside the enclosure was found a small clay smoking-pipe, of the ancient form so generally met with in earthen tumuli and elsewhere throughout Ulster. This pipe was given to one of the children as a plaything, and was unfortunately destroyed; but from the description given by those who saw it there is no doubt of its nature. The stones which covered the enclosure or grave, although large, were still of such weight as might have been lifted by the combined strength of a number of men without any mechanical appliances; but, lying on the ground immediately below the lower end of the enclosure, was an enormous stone slab, of from twenty to thirty tons weight, and which had to be blasted with gunpowder before it was possible to remove it. In superficial size it was amply sufficient to cover in the whole of the enclosure, and possibly it was intended for that purpose. Whether it was beyond the power of the constructors to place it in its proper position, or whether it had once actually formed the covering and been afterwards removed, and had slid downwards when some sacrilegious hands ransacked the ancient grave, can now only be matter of conjecture. At the lower end of this great slab furthest from the enclosure, and lying level with its under edge, was discovered a quantity of extremely thin silver coins, all lying together on the ground, and carefully covered up with a number of stones. These coins were sold to Mr. Patton, jeweller, Newtownards. The foregoing particulars are all that could be obtained; and to complete the description it only remains to state that the whole of the objects above-mentioned—viz., the sepulchral chamber and its contents, the large slab, the silver coins and the pipe—were completely enclosed within the body of the cairn, which extended considerably beyond and above them.

Cairns of stones, as is well known, are extremely numerous in Ulster, and indeed throughout Ireland. Few townlands in the country could be named in which one or more of them may not be seen, or where they are not known to have formerly existed. The word "cairn" enters largely into the nomenclature of places in Ireland, showing that these structures have been noted objects in very remote times. The same is observed in Scotland. Wilson [*Pre-historic Annals*, pp. 59-60] remarks that they are found in every parish, and that the prefix "cairn" is especially common in the names of places in Aberdeenshire. Cairns are not confined to the British Islands, but are met with also in Scandinavia. There, however, it is worthy of note that they do not oc-

cur in Denmark, nor in the south-western parts of Sweden adjoining Denmark; but that throughout the other parts of Sweden and in Norway they are numerous, being known there by the name "Steenrör." [*Worsaae, Primeval Antiquities of Denmark.*] In every instance, almost without exception, wherever they have been opened they have been found to contain relics of the dead, and frequently urns, rude implements, and ornaments. Many of the cairns in Scotland are of great size, and when opened have disclosed stone chambers similar to that found in the one at Scraba. [*Wilson, p. 60.*] In all the general features, therefore, the cairn now under consideration corresponds with others of its class. But the remarkable circumstance of the discovery of coins and a smoking-pipe within the cairn at Scraba distinguishes it from all others yet examined, as this is the first authenticated case in Ireland (and, so far as I know, in any country) where such a discovery has been made. It will be of importance, therefore, to consider how far the existence of these unusual objects in such a situation will enable us to ascertain anything as to the probable period when the monument was erected.

The cairn was undoubtedly a sepulchral monument, as is evident by its stone enclosure containing human remains. It must also have been erected at a time when it was customary to burn the dead body and to deposit earthen urns in graves. These circumstances remove its date to a period not later than the fourth century after Christ, when (if Macrobius be correct) the custom of burning bodies was altogether superseded by burial. Now, the coins discovered are shown by Mr. Carruthers to be (with the exception of the two rudest) similar in general character to Danish, or Hiberno-Danish coins struck about the ninth century. They may be, however, of still earlier date, as he has not been able to identify them exactly with any of the coins yet known to numismatists; and the two *incuse* coins (Nos. 1 and 2 of the plate) are evidently specimens of one of the earliest forms of coinage; being struck on one side only, and bearing characters of the simplest description. The silver, too, of all the coins was excessively thin, showing that it must have been precious when they were in circulation. There seems, therefore, strong evidence to prove that these coins had lain in the position where they were found for upwards of a thousand years.

If we could be certain that the erection of the cairn and the depositing of the coins were simultaneous, we should be justified in concluding that the custom of burning the dead was still practised in Ireland so late as the eighth or ninth century. We should, also, have reasonable grounds for believing that this cairn was the sepulchre of a Dane or Norwegian. But several circumstances render the evidence incomplete. The coins *were not found within the stone chamber*, but were hidden at the outer edge of the great stone slab which lay on the ground beyond it. They were, therefore, not deposited in the grave along with the burnt relics: nor is it at all likely that they should be so. The favourite weapons or ornaments of the deceased might be very appropriate objects to be laid beside his bones, and could not excite the cupidity of the spectators; but, unless human beings a thousand years ago were actuated by different passions from their descendants of the present day,

the depositing of a hundred pieces of silver in a grave would have been a sure method of leading to their abstraction afterwards. For we must bear in mind that these coins had a value which might be compared to that of gold pieces at present. No doubt if any similar discovery had before been made, the present finding of a quantity of coins in a sepulchral mound would have afforded strong corroborative evidence that such a custom occasionally prevailed; and in like manner, if hereafter such a discovery should be made, the present one would at once assume a new value. But as this is the only solitary instance which has yet come to our knowledge, it cannot be taken as sufficient proof. Mr. Stone and myself are therefore inclined to believe that these coins were a hoard deposited within the cairn at some period subsequent to its erection. The spot may have been selected as one both safe and easily recognised:—safe, because the tomb possessed a sanctity in the eyes of the surrounding population; and easily recognisable, as the position of the hoard was well marked by the great slab. So far, then, as the coins are concerned, the evidence afforded leaves the date of the erection as uncertain as ever.—I do not venture to found any argument on the discovery of the smoking-pipe, because neither I nor any of my fellow-inquirers have actually seen it; and although this is not the first instance that has come before me of these pipes being found in places of undoubted antiquity, still I am not in possession of sufficient data to come to any conclusion on the subject.

It seems impossible to decide with any degree of accuracy by what race of people this cairn was erected; but, from what precedes, it will appear highly probable that it was the monument of some distinguished personage. In size it far exceeded the generality of cairns met with in this country. The spot selected, as already shown, was one of the most conspicuous in a very extensive district: it was on a mountain side, on the only thoroughfare passable in ancient times, and it overlooked an important arm of the sea. Its appellation of "Giant's Grave"—a name handed down traditionally through all the sweeping changes of population which the district has several times undergone—also indicates that it was known to be the sepulchre of some remarkable man. In barbarous ages great stature and personal strength were qualities which often determined the selection of a warlike chief. I lay no stress on the opinion expressed by those who saw the bones when found in the grave, that they were of extraordinary size, for I have known various instances of similar self-deception among persons who had not the means of testing the accuracy of their notions. Here they were opening "a Giant's grave," and therefore their minds were prepossessed with the idea that the bones must of course be of superhuman size. We all know how readily the judgment gives way to the imagination in such cases; and, as a distinguished writer on archaeology has observed, "there is no failing to which antiquarian observers seem more liable than *seeing too much*."

Now, if such monuments were found only on the *coasts* of Ireland, which we know were frequented by the Northmen for several centuries, we might conclude, with much probability, that this was the grave of a Scandinavian chief. Its position, on a conspicuous part of a mountain, and in full view of a harbour frequented by the ships of the Vikings, agrees perfectly with the favourite sites of

such sepulchres in the native country of those daring pirates. Worsaae observes that cairns and barrows "were placed, wherever it was possible, on heights which commanded an extensive prospect over the surrounding country, and from which, in particular, the sea could be distinguished." But, as we know that cairns of all sizes occur in every kind of locality throughout Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, we are not justified in assigning to this cairn a Scandinavian origin rather than a Celtic one. We must therefore either conclude that the same customs, of burning the body, interring the ashes in a stone chamber, and raising over the whole a tumulus of stones, were once common to the various races of the North-West of Europe; or adopt the opinion of Professor Nillson, of Copenhagen, that all the relics of the so-called "stone period" are memorials of some older and unknown race, which in the course of time has disappeared before more powerful nations.

Belfast.

ROBERT MACADAM.

ON THE COINS DISCOVERED IN THE CAIRN ON SCRABA MOUNTAIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ULSTER JOURNAL OF ARCHÆOLOGY.

SIR,—The following is an account of a recent interesting antiquarian discovery which lately came under my notice, the particulars of which I give you for insertion in your interesting Journal.

In the month of February last, when some workmen had removed the stones which composed a cairn on Scraba hill, near Newtownards, County of Down, they found a stone eight feet long, and so heavy that to remove it they were obliged to blast it with gunpowder, no doubt with a hope of finding treasure underneath. When so removed, a chamber formed of blocks of stone was exhibited, containing a human skeleton in a greatly decayed state; at one side of the head of which were about two-and-a-half ounces of silver coins, and at the other side a small smoking-pipe, commonly called a Dane's pipe. Several of the coins are in my possession; they are each about the size of a modern sovereign, made of fine silver, very thin, and from that circumstance known to numismatists by the name of "Bracteate." They are in a high state of preservation:—the accompanying plate is descriptive of the varieties. All the coins discovered were very light, and varying from 9 to 12 grains each, which will allow the two-and-a-half ounces to consist of 108 coins. Owing to the extreme fineness and thinness of the silver, the edges of several of the coins are doubled in, as shown in the plate. This is an unusual circumstance, and explains the shape of many of them.

Nos. 1 and 2 are *incuse*, so termed from having the characters indented on one side and raised on the other; these two are, I may say, unique. All the following numbers have obverses, nearly similar to Nos. 52 and 53 in the Supplement to Lindsay's *Irish Coinage*, and the reverses, from 5 to 10 inclusive, resemble the coins of CNUT, in *Ruding*, plate 23, Nos. 3, 11, 13, and 15. This king ascended